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# John G. Fee and Berea College

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JOHN G. FEE AND BEREA COLLEGE

BY

FLORA MAE JONES

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

WESTERN KENTUCKY STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

AUGUST, 1934

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and  
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## PREFACE

When a student at Berea College it occurred to the writer that if the opportunity should ever present itself, she would be interested in knowing more concerning the early struggles and untiring labor of the men who had made possible such a great and unique institution of learning.

Fortunately the opportunity presented itself sooner than anticipated. Upon completing undergraduate work, the writer entered Western Kentucky State Teachers College, Bowling Green, Kentucky to pursue graduate work. One of the requirements for the advanced degree was the writing of a thesis. In choosing a subject the writer's thoughts reverted to Berea and that early desire to secure more first-hand information regarding its beginnings.

It is the aim of this paper to treat in a brief and concise way the development of this institution and in particular the part played by John G. Fee. Also it is hoped to furnish an account of the early struggles of this institution that will be of interest to the general reader or public at large.

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## PREFACE

## CHAPTER

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REV. JOHN G. FEE  
From a daguerreotype taken before the Civil War.



## CHAPTER I

### THE EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATIONAL TRAINING OF JOHN G. FEE

John Gregg Fee was born in Bracken County, Kentucky, September 9, 1816.<sup>1</sup> He had an exceptionally good inheritance from his father John G., son of John Fee, senior. He inherited the Scotch-Irish traits of industry, enterprise, and above all extreme firmness of will from his father. From his mother, Sarah Gregg, he inherited the Quaker characteristics of piety, gentleness, and love of fairness and freedom.<sup>2</sup> He was the first born, and naturally was very much loved by his mother. Consequently the mother had a gracious influence upon his childhood. In his later years he vividly remembered praying at her knee.

Very little is recorded concerning Mr. Fee's early education. It is known, however, that at fourteen he attended a subscription school. It was through the labors of his teacher, a Mr. Joseph Corlis, that he was converted to Christ.<sup>3</sup> Probably this earnest and faithful teacher never knew what was to result from his interest in that pupil. It is quite plausible to believe that this early entrance into a true Christian life saved him from the evil and sinful conditions which prevailed around him at that time. The result was that he grew to be a young man of temperate and chaste habits, honest and honorable.

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1. Dictionary of American Biography (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, N. Y.) 1931, p. 310.

2. Fairchild, History of Serea College (Elm Street Printing Co., Cincinnati, Ohio), 1883. p. 6.

3. Ibid., p. 7.

Following his conversion came the desire for a more extensive education. At about this time he was impressed by the urge that it was his duty to prepare for the Gospel ministry.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, we next find him as a student at Augusta College, located in Augusta, Bracken County, his native county. It was apparently its close proximity to his home that led him to enter this college in 1835.<sup>5</sup> It is of passing interest to note that Augusta College was granted a charter December 7, 1822.<sup>6</sup> John P. Finley was the first president. The college was under the auspices of the Ohio and Kentucky Conference of the Methodist Church.<sup>7</sup> At the time Mr. Fee was a student there, it was reported as having very good buildings and a very capable faculty.<sup>10</sup> On this faculty were such notable men as James P. Finley, Joseph S. Tomlinson, Henry B. Bascum, Joseph M. Trimble, and Burr H. McCown.<sup>8</sup>

Augusta College closed its doors about 1844 or 1845.<sup>9</sup> At that time the Ohio Conference had withdrawn its support because Kentucky was a slaveholding state.

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4 John G. Fee, Autobiography (National Christian Association, Chicago, Ill., 1891), p. 13.

5 Acts of the Legislature of Kentucky (Frankfort, Kentucky, 1825), pp. 164-165.

6 Rev. A. E. Redford, The History of Methodism in Kentucky (Southern Methodist Publishing Company, Nashville, Tenn., 1870), Vol. III, p. 100.

7 Ibid., p. 101.

8 A. H. Redford, Western Cavaliers (Southern Methodist Publishing Company, Nashville, Tenn., 1876), p. 310.

9 Ibid., p. 406.

10 Danville Advertiser (Newspaper), Nov. 24, 1825, p. 2.



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Another complication was that the Southerners would not let their sons go too near the border of slave territory, and in addition they feared that Northern ideas and precepts might be taught.<sup>10</sup> At this time the Kentucky Conference voted to take over Transylvania.<sup>11</sup> After the passing of Augusta College it might be that Mr. Fee conceived the idea of starting a college that later grew into Berea.<sup>12</sup>

Mr. Fee pursued his studies on a classical course at Augusta College for about two and one-half years before transferring to Miami University, Oxford, Ohio in 1837.<sup>13</sup> It is to be inferred that young Fee was granted advanced standing at Miami University, because he entered as a sophomore, and his name appears in the Miami catalogue of 1839 as a member of the junior class.<sup>14</sup>

Due to the fact that there was no student publication at Miami during the years that young Fee was in attendance there, not a great deal is known about his life as a student. The evidences available, however, indicate that he was a typical college student of that day in that he showed marked interest in literary activities, the outstanding extra curricular activity of that age. It is noted with much interest in this respect that he was made a member of the "Erodolphian Society" on May 11, 1839.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Rev. James B. Finley, Autobiography (The Methodist Book Company, Cincinnati, Ohio 1858), p. 424.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 425.

<sup>12</sup> John A. R. Rogers, Birth of Berea (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1833), p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> Centennial Catalogue of 1809 - Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

This was one of the two main literary societies at Oxford at that time. He is listed as "John G. Fee, Mason County, Kentucky". His name appears in the records of the society until June 24, 1839.<sup>16</sup> Thus during the two years at Miami, he all but completed the classical course of study. Upon learning that he could go back to Augusta College, review the last term of study, and complete the other requirements, he returned to his Alma Mater.<sup>17</sup> Hence in 1840, having completed all the requirements of his course of study, he was granted his Bachelor of Arts degree from Augusta.<sup>18</sup>

Although young Fee finished his preparatory training in 1840, for some unknown reason he did not enter Lane Theological Seminary until 1842.<sup>19</sup> This institution which is still located in Walnut Hill, Cincinnati, Ohio, was under the dominance of the Presbyterian church.<sup>20</sup> It was here that Mr. Fee came directly under the powerful influence of such men as Lyman Beecher, William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Parker, and others.<sup>21</sup> Even though he spent only two years at Lane, those two years mark the turning point of his whole life.

Of all the debates and reforms of those stirring times the

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<sup>16</sup> Centennial Catalog, 1809-1909, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

<sup>17</sup> John G. Fee, Autobiography (National Christian Association, Chicato, Ill., 1891), p. 12

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 13

<sup>19</sup> Alvin Fayette Lewis, History of Higher Education in Kentucky (Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1899), p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 25

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

greatest was over the question of slavery. This system was established by law, fortified by long custom and entrenched in the pride, avarice, and prejudices of the slave-holders. Young Fee, the son of a slave holder, was faced with a stupendous problem. If he were to embrace the anti-slavery cause, there would be marked out for him an inevitable pathway of thorns.

In the course of events at the Seminary, Mr. Fee met a former class-mate, John M. Campbell, a former student at Oxford, Ohio. At this same time he also made the acquaintance of James C. White, another theological student.<sup>22</sup> These two men became deeply interested in Mr. Fee, as a native of Kentucky and in view of his relationship to the slave system, since his father was a slave holder. The influence of these two friends can be best expressed in Mr. Fee's own words:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself, and as a practical, manifestation of this, do unto men as you would they should do unto you. I saw the duty enjoined was fundamental in religion of Jesus Christ, and that unless I embraced the principle and lived it in honest practice, I would lose my soul. I saw also as an honest man I ought to be willing to wear the name which would be a fair exponent of the principle that I espoused. This was the name Abolitionist, odious then to the vast majority of people North and especially South. For a time I struggled between odium on the one hand and manifest duty on the other. I saw that to embrace the principle and wear the name was to cut myself off from relatives and former friends, and apparently from all prospects of usefulness in the world. I had in a grove near the seminary a place to which I went every day for prayer. I saw that to have light and peace from God I must make the consecration, and I said, 'Lord, if needs be, make me an Abolitionist'. The surrender was complete.

22.

Alvin Fayette Lewis, History of Higher Education in Kentucky. (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1899), p. 27



I arose from my knees with the consciousness that I had died to the world and accepted Christ in all the fullness of his character as I then understood Him. Imperfect as has been my life, I do not remember that in all my after difficulties I had to consider anew the questions of sacrifice of property, of comfort, of social position, of apparent failure, or personal safety, or of giving up life itself. I never had to consider when in the hands of a mob what my course should be.....23.

Continuing, we next observe that Mr. Fee was born by the thought as to where he ought to expend his future efforts so as to achieve the greatest amount of good. Should he go with a class-mate into a thrifty and prosperous community in the State of Indian, or a foreign missionary to Western Africa, or should he go with another class-mate John E. Campbell,<sup>24</sup> While these fields of labor were being considered, there came irresistibly the consideration of another field, the territory near at hand, that part of the home field which lay in the South, and especially in Kentucky, his native State.<sup>24</sup> At this point the question might be raised - What would have been Kentucky's loss should he have decided in favor of one or the other former fields, As a result of such decision would there have been a Berea College, Possibly so, but very likely not.

"Love thy neighbor as thyself" kept ringing in Mr. Fee's ears, and knowing that the slave-holders were being willingly deceived by the false teaching of the popular ministry, he felt it was his greatest duty to return and preach to them the gospel of impartial love.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> L. E. Fairchild, History of Berea College, (Elm Street Printing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1883). p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45

Mr. Fee is quoted as saying, "In my bedroom on bended knee, and looking through my window across the Ohio River, over into my native State, I entered into a solemn covenant with God to return and there preach this gospel love without which all else was as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." <sup>26</sup>.

Young Fee had kept up his correspondence with his father all during this time that he had been troubled by his thoughts. He told his father of his convictions and purpose. Naturally, as he had anticipated, his father was incensed at his adoption of the cause of the negro slaves, and this brought father and son into conflict. His father's ultimatum was, "Bundle up your books and come home; I have spent the last dollar that I mean to spend upon you in a free State." <sup>27</sup> As a consequence young Fee, then twenty-seven years old, was forced to leave the seminary without graduating. The year 1843 thus marks the end of his career as a student, and his entrance into the more serious one of making his own livelihood. <sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> E. H. Fairchild, History of Berea College, (Elm Street Printing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1883), p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted from a manuscript of Edwin S. Fee, the only living brother of John G. Fee.

<sup>28</sup> The Berea Quarterly (Student's Job Print, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky), p. 34, 1900.



## CHAPTER II

### HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD RELIGION AND SLAVERY

Although Mr. Fee early professed faith in Christ, as has been previously stated, and was desirous of joining the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, his father objected, saying that the son was really too young to understand his own mind.

Several years later the father, not a Christian, had a change in faith, and joined the Presbyterian church.<sup>1</sup> In so doing he invited his son to accompany him. This was the opportunity for which the young boy had been longing and which he was quick to accept. Following this period we see him responding to the call of the ministry, which led him to enter Augusta College, Miami University, and later, Lane Theological Seminary.<sup>2</sup>

His religious convictions as a youth as compared to the convictions of the other youths of his time were probably very strong. Needless to say, however, his convictions as a boy were but threads to the iron-clad ones of his manhood. From the time he left the Seminary in 1843 his earnestness and determination were never in doubt.<sup>3</sup>

In his daily life he was habitually calm, law abiding, and unaggressive. However, when he was put to the acid test (such as mobs) of his belief in regard to "loving thy neighbor as thyself"

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<sup>1</sup>Fairchild, History of Berea (Elm Street Printing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1883), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Alvin Fayette Lewis, History of Higher Education in Kentucky, (Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1899), p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Centennial Catalogue of 1809-1909, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. p. 11.

he was shown to be as unyielding as the rugged mountains of his native state among which he ministered.

It was this determination in mind and spirit concerning religion and his convictions regarding slavery, after leaving the seminary, which led him to attempt to win his father over to his point of view. In this task he was unsuccessful, for his father was at all times violently opposed to any efforts for the freedom of the slave. The outcome was that young Fee was disinherited because of his attempt to free Aliza, one of the family slaves.<sup>4</sup>

About this time another very important incident in Fee's life took place. It was during a series of religious meetings held in his home church that he saw the conversion of the one to whom he gave his best affections, and the one that he then decided to make, if possible, the sharer of his future joys and sorrows.<sup>5</sup> He had no thought, however, of choosing her as a life's companion previous to her conversion. He realized that no one could be happy with him, nor a help-mate in the life he had resolved to live, unless she was converted and in complete harmony with his spirit and purposes. Thus it was that on September 26, 1844, he married Matilda Hamilton, daughter of Vincent Hamilton of Bracken County, Kentucky.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> A. A. Burleigh, Founder of Berea College (Published anonymously) pp. 11-12 (1902)

<sup>5</sup> John G. Fee, Autobiography (Chicago, Ill., National Christian Association, 1891), p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 25



MRS. JOHN G. FEE



It has already been stated that Mr. Fee felt that he had been ordained by the heavenly spirit to take the gospel ministry to the people of his native state. Therefore, after his marriage we find him beginning this work. He was offered the pastorate of two churches in his native county of Bracken, with a very good salary, but on the condition that he go along preaching the gospel and let the subject of slavery alone. He refused to do this since it conflicted with his belief that the gospel was the good news of salvation from sin, all sin, and that the sin of slave-holding was one of the greatest sins of all. Therefore he flatly refused to sell his convictions for what he considered to be a mass of pottage.<sup>7</sup>

Ecclesiastically, Mr. Fee was connected with the New School Presbyterian Church, which had a leaning toward abolition tendencies.<sup>8</sup> It was a presbytery of this sect in Cincinnati that had licensed him to preach the gospel. At that time though, the number of brethren of this faith in Kentucky was relatively few; hence it was that he had difficulty in finding a field of labor.<sup>9</sup> This situation did not alter his ideals in the least. His purpose was unchanged and his willing covenant was to bring the love of the gospel to his native state.

It was now apparent that Mr. Fee's convictions regarding slavery were very strong. He felt that no Christian or upright man could indulge in slavery or tolerate it, and in pursuit of

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<sup>7</sup> John A. R. Rogers, Birth of Berea, (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1933), pp. 44-45.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

his convictions he lent every effort and ran every risk. His ministerial work at this time was largely confined to his own county and to the wilds of the neighboring counties of Mason and Lewis, located on the east.<sup>10</sup> It finally simmered down to a single charge on Cabin Creek in Lewis County.<sup>11</sup> Here in 1845 he established a New School Presbyterian Church.<sup>12</sup> His congregation of three women rapidly increased, until a sermon on "Love to God and Love to Man--the Slave as well as the Slave-Holder" reduced his congregation to nine almost over night. This sermon caused his landlord, Benjamin Given, to turn him out, and the Presbytery to dismiss him from their fellowship for having disturbed the peace of Zion.<sup>13</sup>

This action led him to study anew the subject of church order. His conclusion was that the churches of the New Testament were independent organizations, each embracing all of God's children in anyone locality. For this reason Mr. Fee refused to amalgamate with any of the smaller denominations or sects that refused membership to slave holders.<sup>14</sup> He decided that membership in his church should be based on the acceptance of Christ in all the fullness of his character. He was foresighted enough to see that by choosing such a foundation he could bring together those

<sup>10</sup> Wm. Goodell Frost, Battles and Visions (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky 1933), p. 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> The National Encyclopedia of American Biographies, 1931.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 369.



who had been known as Presbyterians, Disciples, Methodists, Baptists, etc. This church was called the "Church of Christ" and was placed under the auspices of the American Missionary Society.<sup>15</sup>

Even in this remote section of Lewis County Mr. Fee began to be subjected to persecutions. The hatred of the supposedly respectable people soon let loose upon him the persecutions of the cruder element. The first of these pranks was the taking of his wife's horse, a gift of her father, the tying of billets of wood to his tail and sending him galloping through the woods.<sup>16</sup> The horse responded so mildly that the boys declared that "he must have got religion like his mistress."<sup>17</sup> Soon after, an attempt was made to destroy the new house that Brother Fee had built for his family, but the attacking party was repelled by a thunder storm.<sup>18</sup>

Within a short time the leader of this mob was killed by a tenant on his own land. This was but the first of a long series of fatalities among the men who attacked or physically opposed the abolition minister. A man shot at Fee as he sat in his own window but missed his mark. Shortly after, this man was drowned in the Ohio River. No less than thirteen such cases are recorded in Mr. Fee's autobiography, and the superstitious people came to stand in awe of him as one who led a charmed life.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The National Encyclopedia of American Biographies, 1931, p.369.

<sup>16</sup> The Berea Quarterly, (Student's Job Print, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, May 1900), p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 9

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 10

<sup>19</sup> John C. Fee, Autobiography (National Christian Association, Chicago, Ill., 1891), pp. 48-49.

Typical of the mobs and the mob spirit to which Reverend Fee was continually exposed is an event dramatically described by John A. R. Rogers.<sup>20</sup> This particular incident took place in Madison County near the Big Bend of the Kentucky River in 1858.<sup>21</sup>

During the course of a meeting, a mob swept down on the little chapel. When the sermon was about half concluded three men entered the door and with terrible oaths demanded that Mr. Fee come out.<sup>22</sup> Infuriated by the fact that Mr. Fee preached on, they rushed forward and dragged him to the door. Here he was met by another member of the crowd, who pulled a rope from his pocket swearing "that they would hang him if he did not promise to leave the country and not return."<sup>23</sup> Failing to secure any such promise they next seized Mr. Fee's companion, a colporteur named Jones, who had been distributing Bibles and other material considered as abolition literature. They then proceeded to march the two off toward the Kentucky River, threatening to drown them. On the bank of the river in a remote spot underneath the cliffs, they compelled Mr. Jones to strip himself to the waist.<sup>24</sup> They then stretched him on the ground, face downward, and with three sycamore whips struck him many severe blows, leaving cruel welts upon his back. They let up only when he ceased to groan, probably thinking he was dead.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> John G. Fee, Autobiography (National Christian Association, Chicago, Ill., 1891), p. 53.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 55

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 118, 119, 120.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Fee, Autobiography, p. 121

Then the leader turned to Mr. Fee and said, "I will give you five hundred times as much if you do not promise to leave this county and not come back again." Fee replied, "I will take my suffering first," and knelt down. One of the crowd, however cried out, "Don't strike him."<sup>26</sup> The mob started quarreling among themselves. The dissension finally caused the mob to break up. One of the party mounted and rode off; the others, still arguing, followed in quick succession. This left Mr. Fee to take care of Mr. Jones. He assisted Mr. Jones to mount his horse and conducted him to the home of a relative, where they stopped for the night.<sup>27</sup> Apparently, had this mob of men been Kentuckians without any regard for God's ministers, and without any great admiration for high courage, both Jones and Fee would have been scourged or even drowned, as they had been threatened.

It is not to be supposed that Reverend Fee was devoting all his time to preaching emancipation. The stories of the mobs are intermingled continuously with stories of revivals and conversions. He found time for much Bible study, and came to some new views regarding various theological doctrines. This is particularly true in regard to his beliefs concerning baptism.<sup>28</sup>

It is interesting to note how Mr. Fee accidentally became very much interested in this subject. A friend one day happened to give him a little book entitled "Baptism" by Moses Stuart.<sup>29</sup> It

<sup>26</sup> Fee, Autobiography, p. 121.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> G. B. Rogers, Unity of Christians (Cincinnati, Ohio 1891), p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 14



It so happened that he had not studied baptism in his theological course; therefore, he eagerly read the book from cover to cover. He learned that the word baptize was derived from the Greek word "baptizo," which means to dip, plunge, or immerse in a liquid.<sup>30</sup> As a result of much extensive reading on the subject, he came to the conclusion that baptism was the immersion of the entire body in water. In the light of this reasoning any act such as sprinkling or pouring could in no way be interpreted to be the same thing. In discussing the subject with his wife, the two of them came to the conclusion that the Lord had been immersed, and that his instructions were that his disciples be baptized, or immersed in the true and exact meaning of the word.<sup>31</sup> They resolved then that they themselves should be immersed. The question arose, whom should they ask to perform the ceremony. They were acquainted with no one in the state that had similar notions to theirs concerning slavery that would be willing to perform the service for them. Mr. Fee learned through a friend of a certain Mr. Francis Hawley, a native of North Carolina, and a Baptist minister who maintained a strong protest against human slavery. At the time, however, the Reverend Hawley was ministering to a number of un denominational churches in the vicinity of Syracuse, New York.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> John G. Fee, Christian Baptism (Guide Pub., Company, Louisville, Kentucky, 1891), pp. 3-4.

<sup>31</sup> The Berea Quarterly, (Berea, Kentucky, 1900), p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> A. A. Burleigh, Founder of Berea College, (Published Anonymously), p. 4.

Fee wrote to Hawley and requested that he come to Kentucky and Baptize him and his wife. He did so and thus it was the Baptismal ceremony for Mr. Fee and Mrs. Fee took place near their little cottage in the presence of their children and a large gathering of people.<sup>33</sup> Mr. Fee writes in his autobiography, "Reverend Hawley bruied us by baptism in the waters of Cabin Creek, Lewis County, Kentucky." <sup>34</sup> As further evidence of Reverend Fee's manifest interest in baptism, we observe that he was the author of a pamphlet entitled, "Christian Baptism," in which he expressed in somewhat greater detail the substance of the material presented here. <sup>35</sup>

Nine years were spent among the small backwoods churches in a manner similar to that just previously described. The results were hardly visible, but the truth was spoken in love, the seed was sown, the cause of the anti-slavery was kept before the people. Hence it was that Mr. Fee labored at these charges in Lewis, Macan and Bracken Counties until 1853. <sup>36</sup>

At this time Mr. Cassius M. Clay entered the story. Mr. Fee had published an Anti-Slavery manual, and it was through this that Mr. Clay learned of Fee's work. <sup>37</sup> Mr. Clay had a very good

<sup>33</sup> A. A. Burleigh, Founder of Berea College, (Published Anonymously), p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> John G. Fee, Autobiography (National Christian Association, Chicago, Ill., 1891), p. 137.

<sup>35</sup> John G. Fee, Christian Baptism (Louisville, Kentucky, Guide Printing Company, 1891), pp. 11-12.

<sup>36</sup> Wm. Goodell Frost, Battles and Visions, (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1935), p. 11

<sup>37</sup> Wm. H. Townsend, Lincoln and his Wife's Home Town, (The Dobbs Merrill Company, Indianapolis, Ind., 1929), pp. 112-113.



heritage, being a descendant of one of the oldest families of Virginia, a graduate of Yale University, and a large land owner.<sup>38</sup>

At this time Clay was a student and while listening to William Lloyd Garrison lecture against slavery, he became convinced that Garrison was right and began a agitation for the gradual emancipation of the slave.<sup>39</sup> Mr. Clay seems to have been the first man

in America to publish the fact that the mountains were the natural home of liberty.<sup>40</sup> He formed the plan of establishing a

stronghold for free speech and anti-slavery sentiment in the mountains, and with this in view made a purchase of six hundred acres of land, including much of what is now the village of Berea.<sup>41</sup>

In the spring of 1853 he invited Reverend Fee to come and preach in this vicinity.<sup>42</sup> He later encouraged Mr. Fee to come there to live permanently.<sup>43</sup> There is no evidence that either of the men at that time had any thought of establishing a school.

Mr. Fee succeeded in converting thirteen persons in the nine sermons that he delivered in Madison County during his first visit.<sup>44</sup> After this short sojourn, he returned to his home and duties in Lewis County. A few months later he was informed by a

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>39</sup> Horace Greeley, Cassius Marcellus Clay (Harper and Brothers Publishing Company, 32 Cliff Street, New York, N. Y., 1848 ) p. 143.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>42</sup> Cassius Marcellus Clay, Autobiography (J. Fletcher Breman and Company, Electrotyped at the Franklin Type Foundry, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1886), Vol. I, p. 212.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

letter that the pastor of the church in Madison was not doing so well, and that there was danger that the church would be scattered and lost without his assistance. <sup>45</sup>

The good man felt that if this church, planted as it were in the interior of the state and avowedly on christian principles should be allowed to fall, such a failure would be a dire calamity. In discussing the matter with his wife, he considered leaving the churches that they had started on the border of the state. Just at the time the Fees were beginning to spring up into a measure of prosperity--to sell out their small possessions, to take their little ones and go 140 miles into the interior and into a place comparatively a wilderness, was a great privation to have, to say the least. He felt that it was his mission to preach the gospel of love in Kentucky, and at the same time realized that by going into the interior his sphere of labor and influence would be materially increased. <sup>46</sup>

Just at this time another incident occurred which made it possible for Mr. Fee to leave. Mr. J. S. Davis, a native of Virginia, a graduate from Galesburg, Illinois, and later a graduate of the theological school at Oberlin, Ohio, expressed the desire to enter into the work in Kentucky. <sup>47</sup> The churches that had been founded under Mr. Fee's guidance accepted Reverend Davis's offer, and thus the way was made clear for the former to go into the interior. <sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> John A. R. Rogers, Birth of Berea (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1933), p. 63.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 63

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 67

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 71

The removal to the site that was eventually to become Berea, far from the family friends, and among rude surroundings, was a hardship cheerfully undertaken by the young preacher, his wife, and family. As promised in the invitation, Mr. Clay gave him a small tract of land containing about ten acres, located upon a ridge which is the present site of Berea College.<sup>49</sup> It was here in a dense undergrowth of "black-jacks" and scrub oaks that they built their new home. This was in the fall of 1854, and since they were the first family in that vicinity, they became the founders of the village of Berea as well as the church, and later of the college.<sup>50</sup> As it grew in size and secured a post-office, it was officially named Berea, from the place of that name mentioned in the Scriptures.

The establishing of the Church of Christ at Berea upon a firm basis was Mr. Fee's first concern. In a short time this was accomplished, and the faithful apostle was soon making excursions, establishing outposts in Rockcastle, Pulaski, and Garrard counties.<sup>51</sup> By so doing he encountered the opposition of a new force of mobs and the perils of new occasions. Astonishing as it now seems, Mr. Fee was not intimidated in the least, having the conviction that God was his shield. It is true that his work was

<sup>49</sup> The Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay, Memoirs, Writings, and Speeches (J. Fletcher Breman and Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1886), I, 213.

<sup>50</sup> Bulletin of Berea College and Allied Schools (Berea, Kentucky, Berea College Press 1932), p. 10

<sup>51</sup> John A. R. Rogers, Birth of Berea College (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1933), p. 65.



hampered somewhat by these unlawful attacks upon his person, but for the most part he managed to escape, sometimes almost miraculously.

The political campaign of 1856 was in full swing, and the Honorable Cassius M. Clay was desirous of an office in the State legislature, as a member of the Republican party.<sup>52</sup> It was on the Fourth of July of this year, at State Springs near Berea, that Mr. Clay and Mr. Fee in the course of the speech making came into collision on the subject of "The Higher Law."<sup>53</sup> Mr. Clay was canvassing for the votes of the people, and to him their word and the expression of their will was supreme. Mr. Fee, upon the other hand was canvassing for converts to Christianity, and to him the word and will of God alone was supreme. Using the words of A. A. Burleigh, "It was a case of Vox Populi versus Vox dei (that is, the voice of the people against the voice of God)."<sup>54</sup>

Mr. Fee believed that the higher law regarding slavery should be obeyed, right or wrong. There was a fallacy in General Clay's argument when he admitted that he would not obey rigidly the Fugitive Slave law, as it was contrary to natural right. Both men argued earnestly for their respective positions.<sup>55</sup> The discussion led to the chilling of the friendship of the two men, and caused Mr. Clay to withdraw his support from Reverend Fee, whom he regarded as revolutionary, insurrectionary, and dangerous.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> John G. Fee, Autobiography (Chicago, Ill., National Christian Association, 1891), p. 143.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 144

<sup>54</sup> A. A. Burleigh, Founder of Berea College (Pamphlet Published Anonymously), p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

This was one of the greatest trials of Mr. Fee's life, not so much because it threw a cloud over his friendship with Mr. Clay, but because it took away from him the countenance and support of many anti-slavery men in that region who had previously stood by him. He, nevertheless, held tenaciously on his way, feeling that he must not compromise the truth for fear of consequences. This period was followed by violent mobs in different counties in which Mr. Fee had preaching appointments.<sup>57</sup> He was continually being threatened and maligned, but he kept on preaching the gospel of love wherever he could find anyone to listen to him.

This reign of terror and period of gloom lasted for only a few weeks. It was followed by one of great prosperity and abounding hope, as well as freedom from fear. George Candee, a graduate of Oberlin, came into the country at about this time.<sup>58</sup> He was anxious to help in creating anti-slavery sentiment, and Reverend Fee was cheered by such a congenial spirit. This period marks the beginning of their interest in the starting of a school. There is a succession of teachers following Candee, namely, Wm. E. Lincoln, Otis B. Waters, and John A. R. Rogers.<sup>59</sup>

Preacher Fee was exceedingly fortunate in the associates that Providence sent him. The first teachers at Berea were of the elementary type. But with the coming of Professor and Mrs. Rogers, a beginning was made to teach the higher branches. The couple

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<sup>57</sup> Fairchild, History of Berea College (Elm Street Printing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1883), pp. 27-28.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

brought enough scholarship, consecration, and enthusiasm to organize two colleges, and hence we see that the work went along cheerfully and rapidly. <sup>60</sup>

More familiar times were approaching. The great irrepressible conflict (Civil War) was getting ready to break forth. In fact a great furor spread over the nation when John Brown in October, 1859, made his famous raid into Virginia and took the arsenal at Harper's Ferry. <sup>61</sup> This act made every slave-holder in the South tremble and aroused the wrath of many people in both the North and the South. <sup>62</sup> As soon as the news of John Brown's attempt to arm the slaves was known, the South aroused itself to crush out everything within its borders that was in the least opposed to slavery. <sup>63</sup>

Berea had been early known as a school in favor of liberty of the negroes, though it had stood equally for law and order, doing nothing rashly or contrary to the laws of the State. In the heat of the moment, these characteristics were overlooked and disregarded. The stir in Madison and adjoining counties was greatly increased by many false rumors. For instance, it was reported that a shipment of Sharpe's rifles had been intercepted on the way to Berea. Wives could not sleep at night; neither would they let their husbands sleep for fear of an uprising among the slaves. Berea's situation in the rear of the

<sup>60</sup> Fairchild, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Drew, The John Brown Invasion (History of Harper's Ferry Tragedy) (Boston, J. Campbell, 1860), p. 112.

<sup>62</sup> William Ellery Channing, John Brown and the Heroes of Harper's Ferry (Cupples, Upham and Company, Boston, Mass., 1860), p. 143.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 144



Blue Grass region was further pointed out as being admirably located for a strategic raid on the slave-holders.<sup>64</sup> This was accepted by those who were ready to believe the wildest tales as evidence of the warlike purpose of the Bereans. This was decidedly amusing to the people of Berea who never went anywhere armed, or possessed a weapon more dangerous than a pocket knife.

It happened that Mr. Fee was in the East at this time in an attempt to raise money for the school. He was requested by Henry Ward Beecher, pastor of the Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, N. Y., to present the claims of the college at his church.<sup>65</sup> During the course of the address, commenting on the "Raid" Fee stated that "The country needed more men with the courage and spirit of sacrifice of John Brown, but not with his methods."<sup>66</sup> The papers of Kentucky garbled his words and misrepresented his real attitude by reporting that "John G. Fee was in the East calling for more John Browns for Kentucky."<sup>67</sup> All these things stirred the people to a whirlwind of excitement. Public meetings of the citizens of Madison County were called so that they might decide what should be done to rid the state of the Bereans. Finally, after many such gatherings, sixty-two leading citizens of the county were appointed a committee to remove the most prominent Bereans from the state, peaceably if possible, forcibly if necessary. Both Mr. Fee and Mr. Rogers were mentioned personally.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Wm. Goodell Frost, "Battles of Visions" (Pamphlet), Berea College, Berea, Kentucky), p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 10

<sup>66</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>67</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>68</sup> John A. R. Rogers, Birth of Berea College (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1933), pp. 71, 72, 73, 74.

This committee on December 23, 1859, proceeded to the house of Mr. Rogers, the principal of the school.<sup>69</sup> The leader of the band delivered to Brother Rogers a document, demanding in the name of the committee, that he should leave the state within ten days.<sup>70</sup> He attempted to reason with them, setting forth his claims as a law abiding citizen to the undisturbed exercise of his rights. The committee, however, turned abruptly away and delivered a like message to ten other families. Mr. Fee had not yet returned from the East, but his wife received one of the requests.<sup>71</sup>

Those thus warned to leave the state and others interested in the work of building up the church and school met together for deliberation and prayer. They decided at once to make an appeal to the Governor of the state for protection.<sup>72</sup> This appeal was presented in person to Governor Magoffin at Frankfort by Mr. Reed and Mr. Life.<sup>73</sup>

The petition reads as follows: To His Excellency, the Governor of the State of Kentucky:<sup>74</sup>

We, the undersigned loyal citizens and residents of the State of Kentucky, and County of Madison, do respectfully call your attention to the following facts:

1. We have come from various parts of this and adjoining States to this county, with the intention of making it our home; have supported ourselves and families by honest industry and endeavored to promote the interests of religion and education.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 77-78.

2. It is a principle with us to "submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, unto Governors as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers and praise of them that do well," and in accordance with this principle we have been obedient in all respects to the laws of this State.

3. Within a few weeks, evil and false reports have been put into circulation, imputing to us motives, words and conduct calculated to inflame the public mind. Which imputations are utterly false and groundless. These imputations we have publicly denied and offered every facility for the fullest investigation, which we have earnestly but vainly sought.

4. On Friday, the twenty-third inst., a company of sixty-two men, claiming to have been appointed by a meeting of the citizens of our county, without any shadow of legal authority, and in violation of the constitution and laws of the State and the United States, called at our respective residences and places of business, and notified us to leave the county and State and be without this county and State within ten days, and handed us the accompanying document, in which you will see that unless the said order be promptly complied with, there is expressed a fixed determination to remove us by force.

In view of these facts, which we can substantiate by the fullest evidence, we respectfully pray that you, in the exercise of the power vested in you by the constitution, and made your duty to use, do protect us in our rights as loyal citizens of the state of Kentucky.

J. A. R. ROGERS,  
J. G. HANSON,  
J. D. REED,  
JAS. S. DAVIS,  
JOHN F. BOUGHTON,  
SWINGLEHURST LIFE,  
JOHN SMITH,  
E. T. HAYES,  
CHARLES E. GRIFFIN,  
A. C. W. PARKER,  
W. H. TORRY

Berea, Madison County, Kentucky, December 24, 1859.

The Governor's reply was that the public mind was deeply stirred by the event at Harper's Ferry, and that he could not engage to protect them from their fellow citizens, who had resolved that they must go. <sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> E. H. Fairchild, History of Berea College (Elm Street Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1883), pp. 47-55.



The ones threatened saw the imminent danger and realized they must leave at once. After committing themselves to God in humble prayer, most of them that had been warned, retired from the State, going to Cincinnati. The universal feeling was that though they left, the time was not far distant when they would return. It is doubtful if any of the group foresaw the Civil War, which was soon to break out. The convictions were deep in their minds that it was the providence of God which would ultimately work for the good of Berea.<sup>76</sup>

Mrs. Fee intercepted her husband on his return from the East in Cincinnati, and they established a temporary residence in a suburb of that city.<sup>77</sup> Soon after this in 1860 the youngest son, Tappan, then four years old, who had contracted a cold during the trip from Berea in the middle of the winter, took to Diphtheria and died.<sup>78</sup> This was a sad moment, indeed, for the entire family. The child was buried in Bethesda Church yard in Bracken County.<sup>79</sup> The father, in attempting to return and mark the place of burial with a grave-stone, fell into the hands of a mob. He suffered mild humiliation, and was ordered to leave the county and not return.<sup>80</sup>

By this time the slavery situation had become so bad that the way between the states was inevitable. At the beginning the

<sup>76</sup> E. H. Fairchild, History of Berea College (Elm Street Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1885), pp. 47

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 48

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 53

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 54

<sup>80</sup> The Berea Quarterly (Students' Job Print, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, 1900), p. 10

the Abolitionists were in ill-repute in both the North and the South. They were blamed for causing the war. The most that could be done was to call upon the nation to obey God and let the slave go free, a condition neither side would consider.

The defeat of the North in the first battle of Bull Run and numerous other engagements followed. The affair that was at first thought to be a little skirmish developed into a long-drawn out war, entailing great suffering upon all concerned. Physical disability on the part of Mr. Fee (aged forty-five at that time) prevented him from entering the army and bearing arms.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, he was convinced that he could accomplish a greater good by moral and spiritual work than by physical means. It was his belief that the North should enlist both white and black men as soldiers without regard to color.<sup>82</sup> He had little faith in the Union cause until they adopted this plan, and Lincoln had issued the "Emancipation proclamation on January 1, 1863."<sup>83</sup>

At this juncture Mr. Fee felt that his duty called him to perform a very important piece of work for the colored soldiers being enlisted at Camp Nelson. This camp was located in a great bend of the Kentucky River, south of Nicholasville, in Jessamine Count. He believed that his knowledge concerning the government and the North fitted him particularly well to deal with the newly-liberated colored man.<sup>84</sup> Another reason was that he wished to

<sup>81</sup> Wm. Goodell Frost, Battles and Visions (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky 1935), p. 13.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 14

<sup>83</sup> W. F. Garrie and Company, The World Book (Chicago, Ill., 1924), IV, 2019.

<sup>84</sup> A. A. Burleigh, Founder of Berea College (Published Anonymously) p. 9 (1902)

instruct, comfort, and encourage them so that they might better face their new obstacles.

Reverend Fee was not slow in winning the favor of the commanding officers, and secured help from the North. He was instrumental in aiding the colored people in these eventful months, by securing a building and a number of teachers to instruct them. When this school was firmly established, it was named the "Fee Memorial Institute."<sup>85</sup> The colored people were taught largely the elements of writing. Later, through his managing, a camp of refuge, for women and children, was established.<sup>86</sup> To take care of their spiritual life, a church was organized.<sup>87</sup> Thus through his efforts thousands of colored people became better fitted to become their own masters and to be worthy citizens of the Republic.

The pursuance of this work embraced what were possibly Mr. Fee's most triumphant days. There were not only very good prospects that the nation would be delivered from the rebellion, but also that it would be successful in freeing the five million slaves. This was an event for which he had long been praying and laboring. There were additional thrills of interest to him. For more than twenty years he had been shunned, and hated on account of his Anti-slavery beliefs. Now to receive the friendly, hearty hand clasp of the Northern white men, and to meet the benignant

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<sup>85</sup> History of Education in Kentucky (Kentucky Department of Education, Frankfort, Kentucky, July 1914), VII, 327.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.



smiles and grateful benedictions of the colored men, would but make him glad. During the latter part of the war Mr. Fee gave the most of his time for some fifteen months to the work at Camp Nelson.<sup>88</sup>

At the close of the war Reverend Fee came back to Berea and gave most of his time and strength to building up the school and church there. This was in January 1866.<sup>89</sup> The school was thus opened after being closed six years, with abundant thanksgiving for all God's mercies. Mr. Rogers was again principal and Mr. Wheeler and Miss Snedaker were assistant teachers.<sup>90</sup> Though now a college in name, the rudiments of knowledge were largely taught. All went prosperously until near the close of the term, when three colored children were admitted.

This event had the greatest effect upon the academic department, causing a large number of students to withdraw from school.<sup>91</sup> The teachers were not disheartened by this new trial but went on courageously, even though the school was practically deserted. This dark cloud like all the others soon passed away, and a brighter future dawned for Berea. Some of the students who left, returned, and new ones kept coming in to fill the ranks. Again the school had weathered another storm of popular protest.

During the remainder of Mr. Fee's life (died in 1901) all moral, upright and courageous students, whether white or colored,

<sup>88</sup> Alvin Fayette Lewis, History of Higher Education in Kentucky, (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1899), p. 36.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 43

<sup>90</sup> William Goodell Frost, Battles and Visions (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1933), p. 25.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 24

were admitted to Berea. It is interesting to note that he took special delight in the colored students although he was no less a friend to others. Mr. Fee felt that the value of the work of the colored graduates of Berea in guiding their own people and promoting good relations between the races was incalculable.

In the 1904 Kentucky legislature passed the following act:

1. That it shall be unlawful for any person, corporation or association of persons to maintain or operate any college, school or institution where persons of the white and negro races are received as pupils for instruction; and any person or corporation who shall operate or maintain any such college, school or institution shall be fined one thousand dollars, and any person or corporation who may be convicted of violating the provisions of this act, shall be fined one hundred dollars for each day they may operate said school, college or institution, after such convictions.
2. That any instructor who shall teach in any school, college or institution where members of said two races are received as pupils for instruction shall be guilty of operating and maintaining same and fined as provided in the first section thereof.
3. It shall be unlawful for any white person to attend any school or institution where negroes are received as pupils or receive instruction, and it shall be unlawful for any negro or colored person to attend any school or institution where white persons are received as pupils or receive instruction. Any person so offending shall be fined fifty dollars for each day he attends such institution or school: Provided that the provisions of this law shall not apply to any penal institution or house of reform.
4. Nothing in this act shall be construed to prevent any private school, college, or institution of learning from maintaining a separate and distinct branch thereof in a different locality not less than twenty-five miles distant, for the education exclusively of one race or color.
5. This act shall not take effect or be in operation before the fifteenth day of July, one thousand nine hundred and four...92

In closing one might conjecture what stand the worthy Mr. Fee might have taken regarding the hostile legislation in 1904 had he been living. Needless to say, "he would have opposed it with every tooth and nail that he possessed." 93

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93 Wm. Goodell Frost, Battles and Visions (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1933), p. 3.



## CHAPTER III

## BEREA COLLEGE

It would be next to impossible to write anything about the early existence of Berea College without mentioning the influence and assistance of Mr. Fee. Conversely it would be just as difficult to write anything concerning Mr. Fee's work without mentioning Berea. This indicates the intimate connection between the two during its formative period.

The institution had a very inauspicious beginning. Unlike many denominational and state schools of the same time, it received no support of any large sect or the assistance of the state.<sup>1</sup> As a benevolent organization it was open to young men and women of good moral character that were willing to work as they learned. As a consequence it had to depend almost entirely upon the contribution and sacrifices of its founders and as these became inadequate, outside support had to be solicited.<sup>2</sup>

There is an interesting little story connected with the recognition of the need of a school. It supposedly occurred "that one afternoon in the fall of 1854 while Mr. Fee and George Candee, a ministerial student from Oberlin, Ohio, were engaged in cutting wood they became involved in conversation, during which one mentioned the idea of a school." Thus as Mr. Fee loved to tell

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<sup>1</sup> Ben LaBree, Famous Men of Kentucky (George G. Fetter Publishing Co., Louisville, Kentucky, 1901-1902), p. 30

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

later, "They literally split out the idea of the school." <sup>3</sup> They thus talked about the idea of an extended school--a college in which not only the arts and sciences were to be taught, but the principles of love in religion, liberty, and justice in government as well.

With a view of investigating the matter and securing the best location for the proposed school, they visited a community in Rockcastle County.<sup>4</sup> It appeared to be a very good place and everyone seemed interested. As a preparatory step, friends were induced to erect a log-house to be used as a place for the school, and for public worship. The building was speedily completed, and Otis B. Waters, a student from Oberlin, Ohio, was secured as teacher of the school.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after, some enemy of the movement burned the building, and as a result, the supporters were intimidated and were unwilling to rebuild. Nothing more was accomplished that year.

In the succeeding year, 1855, Mr. Fee fell back on Berea, starting a district and subscription school there. This has always been accepted as Berea's beginning.<sup>6</sup> The services as a teacher of William E. Lincoln, another theological student from Oberlin College, was secured through the American Missionary Society. Mr. Lincoln, was tall and commanding in appearance. He

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<sup>3</sup> John G. Fee, Autobiography (National Christian Association, Chicago, Ill., 1891), p. 93

<sup>4</sup> Fannie Cassiday Duncan, When Kentucky was Young (John P. Morton and Company, Louisville, Kentucky, 1928), p. 119.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 120

<sup>6</sup> Duncan, Loc. cit.

was a native of London, England. As a young man, he had come under the influences of President Finney of Oberlin, while the latter was preaching in England. This later resulted in his becoming a student at the Ohio institution. Thus during his vacation we see that he heartily entered into the preaching and teaching in Madison and surrounding counties with the other Oberlin students.<sup>7</sup>

Such evidence as there is indicates that William E. Lincoln was the teacher again in 1858. Otis B. Waters came back and conducted the school at Berea during the fall of 1857.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that he used an improvised method of the modern way of teaching words and then analyzing them, rather than teaching the alphabet. Due to the enthusiasm that he displayed and to his skill and inventive power as a teacher, his few students made remarkable progress. Mr. Waters was the last of the student teachers to have charge of the school.<sup>9</sup>

The next year, 1858, is outstanding since it marks the coming of John A. R. Rogers to Berea as its first principal.<sup>10</sup> Since Mr. Rogers is sometimes considered the co-founder of Berea College along with Mr. Fee, it will be well to consider his early preparation and training more fully. Reverend Rogers was a native of Cornwell, Connecticut. He was a descendant of John

<sup>7</sup> John A. R. Rogers, The Birth of Berea College (Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, 1933), p. 38

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; p. 39

<sup>10</sup> Dictionary of American Biography (Charles Scribner's Sons New York, N. Y., 1931), p. 987.



Rogers, the martyr, and through him a long line of other Puritan ancestors known for their good and conscientious work. He prepared for college at Williams Academy, Stockbridge, Mass., with the idea of continuing his studies at an eastern college. Just before he entered on his college course, however, his parents moved to Ohio and settled in the vicinity of Oberlin. He received his collegiate training there, graduating in 1851, and then completed his theological training in 1855.<sup>11</sup>

After graduating, he stayed on at Oberlin, where he taught in the Preparatory Department, and in the college itself. In addition he taught for a short while in New York City.<sup>12</sup> He was deeply imbued with the Oberlin spirit and was impressed with the greatness of the blessing it would accomplish, to establish a similar college elsewhere. Thus it seems that when God has work to be done, he prepares his own instruments--in this case it seems that while Mr. Rogers was at Oberlin and in New York he providentially became interested in the mountain region of Kentucky. It appealed to him as an ideal location for missionary and educational work. The ignorance and destitution of these people greatly moved him and the difficulties did not dampen his spirits but rather tended to activate him. His internal urge was strong enough to cause him to seek his release from the Congregational Church in Roseville, Illinois, where he had gone several years previous.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 987

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 987

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 987

In deciding to go to Kentucky, Mr. Rogers had consulted no one. He had not sought any pledge from any source for his support. He was aware of the American Missionary Association's eagerness to have some one do the work of Gospel preaching and Christian education to which he seemed so irresistibly called. He still maintained the thought of building a college like Oberlin and felt confident that He who called him would sustain him at all times during his proposed work.<sup>14</sup>

It will be observed that Mr. Rogers was a more mature man than any of the previous teachers, and in addition he had in mind a larger school. The work of Mr. Fee in the Central part of the State (Madison County) was not entirely unknown to Mr. Rogers. This is explained by the fact that Mr. Fee's successor in Lewis and Bracken County was no other person than Reverend James S. Davis, who had married Mr. Roger's sister.<sup>15</sup> It was but natural that he should visit the Davis family on his first trip to Kentucky to look over the situation. His next move was to go to Madison County to consult Mr. Fee and investigate the opportunities for his plan there. Apparently, he was well impressed, because Mr. Fee was able to prevail upon him to bring his wife to Berea and start his proposed school.

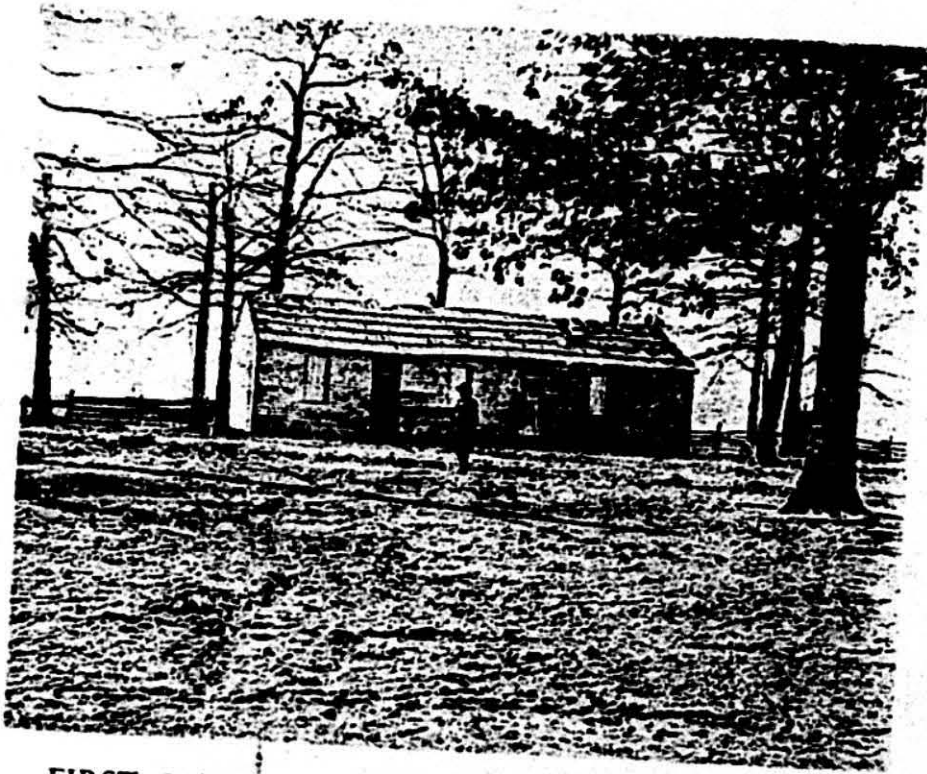
Accordingly in April 1858, the Rogers couple with their infant son, a babe in arms, journeyed to Berea and opened the school under circumstances far from encouraging.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> John G. Fee, Autobiography (National Christian Association, 1891), pp. 125.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 133.



**FIRST SCHOOL BUILDING ERECTED IN BEREA**  
The College was started in that half to the left, the extension being made later. Torn down years ago.



The village of Berea as they found it at that time consisted of a log cabin located on the north-eastern end of the semi-circular ridge, while Mr. Fee's house stood in about the middle of this little oasis. About a quarter of a mile further on there were two cabins, near which, not a stone's throw away, was the school.<sup>17</sup>

The school building from which Berea was to grow was long, low, and unpainted, containing a single room, and covered with clapboard shingles. There was hardly a redeeming feature about the whole structure--it was simply a covering, and the furnishings within were as rude as the walls.<sup>18</sup> It certainly required a prophet's visions in such crude surroundings to begin work even at all. As evidence that there was a driving and a guiding spirit that was not to be thwarted by seemingly great odds, there exists the Berea College of today.

Mr. Rogers at once entered into the work of more fully organizing the school and by his efficiency and enthusiasm brought it into high repute. In this work he was materially assisted by his wife, who assumed the larger part of the teaching load, leaving him free to canvass for students and get up exhibitions. Pupils flocked in from Madison and adjacent counties, so that soon both were needed in the work of instruction.<sup>19</sup>

At the conclusion of a successful session, it was decided to end the term with an educational exhibit and entertainment. The whole community was enlisted in the preparation for the occasion.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel M. Wilson, History of Education in Kentucky (The J. S. Clark Publishing Co., Chicago-Louisville 1928), II, 266.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 267

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 269

An open air platform covered with leafy branches, with towering oaks for pillars was prepared, and seating accommodations were made for a number larger than had ever come together before in the community. A program of exercises, songs, speeches, and a picnic was arranged. Had not the school been successful, the closing exercises would have made it so. As it was, it was merely a prediction of the greater times that were yet to come.<sup>20</sup>

The achievements of the school which had created so much interest warranted organizing a college even though it might be some years before granting degrees. The need of such an institution was realized when it was considered that there was a large area around Berea, to the east, south, and west in which there was hardly a school that could give instruction higher than that of an elementary education. In addition to this was the fact that most of the other schools in Kentucky were practically closed to the mountain people. There was in reality a living demand for some one to bring a higher education to the promising sons and daughters of the isolated mountaineers.

Accordingly, as is recorded in the minutes of the Board of Trustees, a meeting was called September 7, 1858 by Mr. Fee and Mr. Rogers.<sup>21</sup> Mr. Davis, Mr. Candee, John Smith, J. G. Hanson, William Stapp, John Burman, and T. J. Renfro were invited to attend and consider the expediency of framing a college constitution and obtaining a charter.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> John A. R. Rogers, Birth of Berea College (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky 1933), p. 55.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 60

<sup>22</sup> Bulletin of the Department of Education (Published by the Department of Education, Frankfort, Kentucky, July 1914), Vol. 7 No. 4, p. 300.

The meeting was held in Mr. Fee's study, where after an opening prayer, Mr. Fee was elected chairman. Mr. Rogers was made chairman of a committee composed of Mr. Smith and Mr. Stapp to draft a preamble and constitution to be considered at the next meeting to be held December 1, 1858. At this later meeting the proposed constitution and by-laws were fully discussed and finally adopted. A board of Trustees were appointed and officers elected as follows: John G. Fee, president of the board; J. A. R. Rogers, vice-president; J. G. Hanson, secretary; T. E. Renfro, treasurer.<sup>23</sup> However, according to the minutes kept by the Board of Trustees, the constitution was not adopted until 1859, and even then it did not have the necessary number of signatures to secure a charter.<sup>24</sup> Under a general law of the state it was specified that when a proper constitution and by-laws were recorded in the County Clerk's office and signed by ten citizens as trustees a charter could be secured.<sup>25</sup> The series of events including John Brown's Raid and the Civil War presented them from becoming fully incorporated before the spring of 1866.<sup>26</sup>

A consideration of the constitution and by-laws as drawn up by Mr. Rogers reveals why they were so slow in getting the required number of trustees. The constitution was in general similar to that of other colleges, and especially like that of

<sup>23</sup> Bulletin of the Department of Education of Kentucky (Published by the Department of Education, Frankfort, Kentucky, July 1914), Vol. 7 No. 4, p. 301.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 301

<sup>25</sup> Bulletin of Berea College and Allied Schools (Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, 1932-33), p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 10



Oberlin. The Christian character was indicated by the beginning words: "In order to promote the cause of Christ." The magnanimity of the founders is shown by quoting two of the by-laws:

(1) "This college shall be under an influence strictly Christian, and as such shall be opposed to sectarianism, slave holding, casts and every other wrong institution or practice;"

(2) "The object of this college shall be to furnish the facilities for a thorough education, at the least possible expense to the same, and all the inducements and facilities for manual labor which can reasonably be supplied by the Board of Trustees shall be offered to its students." 27

It is to be observed that there were some friends of the movement who believed in the general principles of justice and love, but did not believe that it was expedient to make a specific application of it to the co-education of the races. To them the rule, "Do unto men as you would that they should do unto you" was all well and good as long as you did not attempt to educate both white and colored in the same school. Among this group was the Honorable Cassius M. Clay, who declined to act as a trustee.<sup>28</sup> As a result we see that the caste issue sifted the very board of trustees themselves.

The fact that the required number of trustees was not at once secured, did not materially hamper the development of the school. The prudential committee, composed of the president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer made themselves personally responsible for the "Woolwine Purchase" of 117 acres of land including much of

<sup>27</sup> Alvin Fayette Lewis, History of Higher Education in Kentucky, (Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1899), p. 33

<sup>28</sup> A. A. Burleigh, Founder of Berea College (Phamplet published Anonymously), p. 7.

the present site of Berea College and part of the land on which the village of Berea now stands. The cost of this tract of land was then the staggering sum of \$1,800.<sup>29</sup>

At the close of the school term as previously described, plans were at once started to accommodate more students. Money was raised to build an annex to the school house, and two additional teachers were secured, Mr. and Mrs. John G. Hanson.<sup>30</sup> The school opened in the fall of 1858 with about one hundred pupils. The most of these came from the region contiguous to Berea and from the adjoining counties. The same methods of teaching were pursued as in the previous term, and the same satisfactory results were achieved.<sup>31</sup>

The work of Berea was brought before the people of the North through the publications in the magazine of the American Missionary Association. Unfortunately, none of these early articles can be quoted directly. In Kentucky itself the work was made known more directly through the sermons and lectures of Mr. Fee, Mr. Rogers, and others in various parts of the State. This induced a number of families to move to Berea from surrounding counties, and some families even from the North came to Berea to make it their home and thus gain the benefits of the school.<sup>32</sup>

The educational work continued to prosper until the fall of 1859.<sup>33</sup> Shortly after this the war of secession was on, and all

<sup>29</sup> Wm. Goodell Frost, Battles and Visions (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1935), p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 20

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 20

<sup>32</sup> The Berea College Quarterly (Berea College Students' Job Print. Berea, Kentucky, 1900), p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 7

activity at Berea ceased. In the meantime the hearts of the exiled Bereans were true to their former homes and work, and even though they were temporarily engaged elsewhere, they longed and watched for an opportunity to return. During the progress of the war, only short temporary visits were possible. On one of these trips to Berea Reverend Fee was prevented from going on and joining his wife by the Battle of Richmond.<sup>34</sup> Under such unsettled conditions nothing of consequence could be accomplished. It is to Mr. Fee's credit, however, that during this time he succeeded in raising the money necessary to pay for the land purchased for the college.<sup>35</sup>

Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, terminated the war on April 9, 1865.<sup>36</sup> In January of 1866, Berea College again opened its doors to students. After having been closed exactly six years, it was again under the direction of Mr. Rogers, the former principal. The teaching staff was extended still further. Mr. Wheeler and Miss Snedaker filling the capacities of assistant teachers. Mr. Fee was especially active at this time in the duties of field work, getting new students for Berea and at the same time raising money for new and better buildings.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The Berea College Quarterly (Berea College Students' Job Print, Berea, Kentucky, 1900), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>36</sup> Ridpath, History of the United States (Elliott Madison Company, Chicago, Ill., 1914), XI, 5292.

<sup>37</sup> Fairchild, History of Berea College (Elm Street Printing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio), 1883, p. 6.



Every thing progressed smoothly until toward the end of the term, when three colored children were admitted. The constitution and by-laws adopted back in 1859 had specified particularly that this should be permissible. The reason that they had had no colored students previous to this time was that none had applied for admittance. <sup>38</sup>

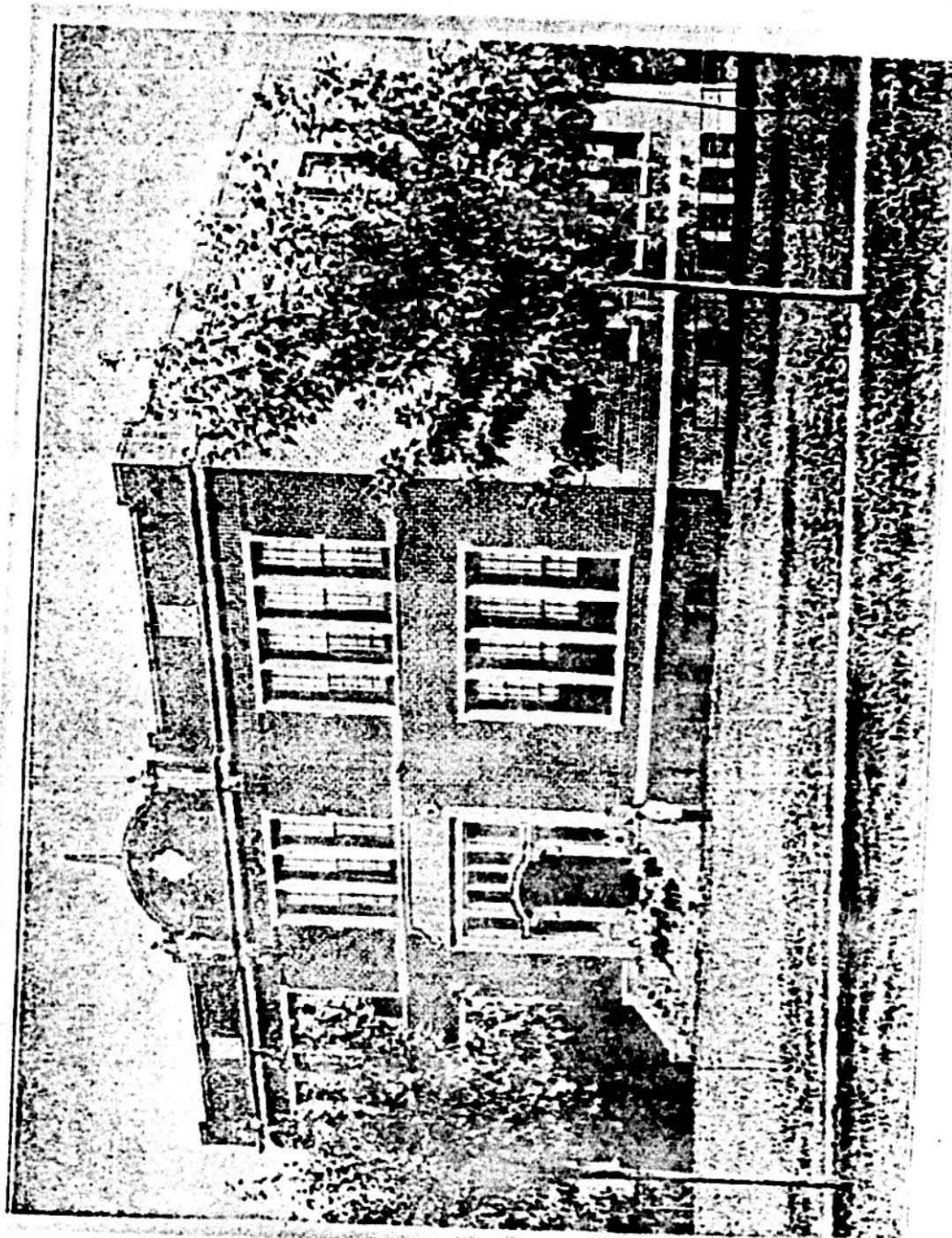
The effect was that a rumbling of protest became discernible among the student body. In the primary department the feeling was less severe, but in the academic department the situation was much worse. During the chapel services Mr. Rogers pointed out that "if one was to have a christian spirit he must be gentle and loving, and never by act or word show scorn or contempt for those even of another color, seeking to become wiser and better." <sup>39</sup>

They were reminded that in some of the best colleges of the United States colored students were received and that it was a duty and a privilege to encourage and help the lowly in every suitable way, although perhaps at a cost of self-denial.

The breaking point came finally when a young man got up, and quietly walked out with down-cast head. He was followed by several others, and then by a number of young ladies. Their exit was accompanied by a solemnity deeper than that of the grave. Mr. Rogers at this point stated that if anyone else was not in sympathy with the idea, that he should also leave. After this no

<sup>38</sup> Fairchild, History of Berea College (Elm Street Printing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio), 1885, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 11



KNAPP HALL, TRAINING SCHOOL

This building now stands on the same lot that was occupied by the first school building

one left and the school work went on as before.<sup>40</sup>

Naturally a clamor arose in the community, and wonder was expressed at why well enough could not be let alone, and why the prosperity of the school had to be destroyed. The teachers, however, were not dismayed but went about their work, giving their minutest attention to their teaching. Some of the students that had left returned, and new ones came to fill the ranks. By the next term, the atmosphere had become balmy and peace and contentment reigned over both the white and colored students.<sup>41</sup>

During the first years after the school was reopened there was a great influx of students from every quarter, and of every complexion. The white students were largely from the mountains but by no means exclusively so. The Blue Grass area in Kentucky bordering on the Ohio River furnished quite a number. Some of the most intelligent and best young people of the North were attracted by various reasons, the chief of which were the excellent instruction received, the cheapness of living, and the cheerful atmosphere of the college and surrounding village. In addition there was a fairly large number of colored students.

Berea came to be known as a place where the colored person was treated with kindness and where colored children could obtain knowledge. This led quite a number of colored folks to moving to Berea. There were many white families that coveted educational training for their children and were glad to obtain it at any

<sup>40</sup> Wm. Goodell Frost, Battles and Visions (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1933), Pamphlet, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 19



sacrifice. The Hanson Saw and Planing Mill gave employment to many, and laborers were needed for building new structures for the citizens as well as the college. Hence it was that during this period Berea rapidly expanded.<sup>42</sup>

As the number of students increased, there was necessity for more buildings to accommodate them. It was the aim of the founders to remove the school as soon as possible over to the grounds already purchased for the college, which was nearly a half mile distant from the old location. Therefore we see that most of the buildings were being constructed on the new campus.<sup>43</sup> These buildings were hastily thrown together, being constructed of rough planks, put up endways. The crevice between the boards was covered with lathes, both inside and outside. These buildings were so crowded that some of the young men were forced to occupy attics, reached only by ladders.<sup>44</sup> Some of these rooms were so low that a person could stand erect only under the ridge.

The increase of pupils of all classes, some scarcely knowing the alphabet, and others qualified to study Latin, Greek, the higher arts, and sciences, demanded an additional force of teachers.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Samuel M. Wilson, History of Kentucky (The J. S. Clarke Publishing Company, Chicago, Ill.), III, 264.

<sup>43</sup> Bulletin of the Department of Education (Published by the Department of Education, Frankfort, Ky.), Vol. 7, No. 4., July 1914, p. 307.

<sup>44</sup> John G. Fee, Autobiography (National Christian Association, Chicago, Ill., 1891), p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

Added to the faculty at this time were Mrs. W. E. Lincoln, Miss Donaldson, Miss Pratt, Miss Clark, Miss Pack, and Miss Keiser all noble women, full of zeal for the work in which they were engaged.<sup>46</sup>

All the teachers were so busy that they hardly had time for their meals. Each new comer, whether student or citizen, had to be received and cared for. Employment had to be secured for all those who wished to earn part of their expenses. Those who had nothing to pay for tuition or books had to be advised and encouraged. In addition there were meetings to attend for the settlement of affairs pertaining to a rapidly growing community. On the whole the teachers kept a watchful eye over the students and saw that they studied wisely and faithfully.<sup>47</sup>

Though the work and expansion of the college was carried on in a very economical way, and though the improvements were often cruder, their costs, plus the salaries of the teachers, required the expenditure of considerable money. The work of raising funds rested entirely upon Reverend Fee and Mr. Rogers during these early years after the reopening of the college.<sup>48</sup> These two men were perfectly agreed that "whatever money was needed must be sought from the Lord, for the school was dedicated to Him, and they had perfect faith that their requests would be heard and answered."<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Fannie Cassiday Duncan, When Kentucky was Young, (John P. Morton and Company, publishers, Louisville, Ky., 1928), p. 116.

<sup>47</sup> The Berea Quarterly (Berea College Student's Job Print, Berea, Kentucky, 1900), p. 31.

<sup>48</sup> Wm. Goodell Frost, Battles and Visions (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1933), p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

As time wore on, without ceasing to put their trust in God as a new source of help, they wrote letters to friends, and to a limited extent to the press, soliciting financial aid. When this method failed, driven by necessity, either Mr. Fee or Mr. Rogers would go to such persons as they believed would be glad to help them in their work and the furthering of their progress. Invariably they were given an attentive audience, and as a result, the worthy cause in behalf of which they were working was rewarded accordingly.<sup>50</sup>

Many interesting experiences could be cited, but time and space limits this to just a few instances:

"Soon after the institution was reopened Mr. Rogers wrote to a friend in Northampton, Massachusetts, a Mr. J. T. Willinston, and told him of the work that was being carried on at Berea. He replied with a check of \$100.00, saying 'you may expect as much yearly, so long as you can continue to do such good work.' He increased his annual donation to \$500.00, and one year it was \$1,800.00.....<sup>51</sup>

"At another time \$500 was needed for a payment on some real estate. The brethren had been making their wants known to God through prayer. Shortly after this Mr. Fee received a check for \$500 from Reverend Foster of Illinois, of whom he had never heard. The donation was later trebled by the good man and his worthy wife.....<sup>52</sup>

"On another instance while Mr. Rogers was on a trip raising money, it happened that he stayed over night with a clergyman and his family. In the course of the evening he related the story of his work at Berea. As he returned the host said, 'I am sorry we have no money to give you.' At breakfast the next morning, however, he was told, 'I was hasty in speaking last night, I have \$220 for you. My daughter was so impressed by your story that she could not sleep and has decided to go without the piano for which she had saved the money'.....<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> John A. R. Rogers, Birth of Berea College (Berea College Press Berea, Kentucky, 1935), pp. 101-102.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 102

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.



Various publishers gave of their books to the library which was begun as soon as the school started, and is now one of the largest and finest in the State. There was great rejoicing among the faculty and students when the Appleton Company donated their cyclopaedia. <sup>54</sup>

The three year period from 1866-1869 witnessed the rapid development of the school in securing grounds and buildings, an increased faculty, and the thorough organization of the college into different departments. <sup>55</sup> Though all this had been done cheerfully, it had not been accomplished without the expenditure of a great deal of strength, and the very life-blood of those most responsible for carrying on the work. Mr. Fee felt that he could not give in the future so much time to raising money. <sup>56</sup> Mr. Rogers was at the time experiencing the beginning of a nervous break-down which compelled him later to hand in his resignation as principal and as a professor. <sup>57</sup>

In 1869 Mr. Rogers, after consulting the other trustees of the college, urged very strongly that E. H. Fairchild, then head of the Preparatory Department at Oberlin College, should be invited to become president. Mr. Fairchild had many superior and promising qualifications for the office; he belonged to a family of college presidents; he had preached, lectured, taught, and managed young men in the largest department of Oberlin College.

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<sup>54</sup> Alvin Fayette Lewis, History of Higher Education in Kentucky (Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 1899), p. 37.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

He had accomplished all this with marked ability, and had also been very successful in raising funds for that institution. <sup>58</sup>

Therefore, it was the logical outcome that he was asked to become Berea's first president. After investigating the situation and considering the school's future, he accepted the office. It is interesting to note that he declined the presidency of two other colleges offered him at the same time, in deciding in favor of Berea. His coming marks a new step forward in the history of the college, and also marks the close of its early period. When the college re-opened in 1866, the college possessed approximately 117 acres of uncleared woodland; it had no endowment, no credit, and only one ramshackle building. <sup>59</sup> In 1869 when Edward Henry Fairchild took the presidency, the college owned a large tract of land, the most of which was cleared. It had buildings valued at \$25,000, the beginning of an endowment, and a growing constituency of friends who were contributing annually to its support, and who could be relied upon to come to its aid in a time of an emergency. <sup>60</sup> At the same time a normal department was furnishing many teachers, both white and colored, to the State. Preparatory, freshman, sophomore, and regular college classes had been organized. Members of these graduating classes have subsequently become useful and honored alumni of the institution. <sup>61</sup>

President Fairchild's sound judgment, his practical wisdom

<sup>58</sup> Ben LaBree, Notable Men of Kentucky (George G. Fetter Pub., Co., Louisville, Kentucky, 1901-1902), p. 132.

<sup>59</sup> Samuel M. Wilson, History of Education in Kentucky (The J. S. Clark Publishing Company, Chicago, & Louisville 1928) II, 269.

<sup>60</sup> Travis Edwin Smith, The Rise of Teacher Training in Kentucky (Collins and Ghermer Company, Nashville, Tenn., 1932), p. 146.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

in dealing with everyday problems, his ability to manage students, and above all his ability to raise money, were largely responsible for leading the college onward. During this period we see that the banks would promptly loan money on the notes of the college, and business men in general were glad of its patronage.<sup>62</sup> It was during this administration that the Ladies' Hall ( a girl's dormitory), the much needed college chapel, Lincoln Hall ( a recreation hall and library), and other small buildings were erected.<sup>63</sup>

It is to be noted that Professor Fairchild was the first actual president of Berea College. His administration covered a twenty-year period, beginning in 1869 and lasting until his death in 1889. He was an administrator and an educator of marked ability. He is credited with guiding the college through the reconstruction period, and adding materially to the equipment of the college in the form of buildings, endowments, and faculty.<sup>64</sup>

After the brief administration of President William B. Stewart, from 1890 until 1892, Professor William Goodell Frost, of Oberlin College, came to the presidency of the school in September, 1892.<sup>65</sup> The twenty-eight year period from 1892-1920, might well be called the "Golden Era" in Berea's expansion. The achievements can be traced directly to President Frost, who guided the destiny of the institution through this long span of years.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Bulletin of Berea College and Allied Schools (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky), p. 10.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 11

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 11

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 13

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 18



Professor Frost had been extremely successful as a teacher of Greek at Oberlin College before becoming president. His thorough acquaintance with educational work in this country and Europe, in addition to his unusual ability as a writer and an orator, plus his many other diversified talents especially fitted him for his administrative duties.<sup>67</sup> It was but natural that the institution under such noble guidance should make the progress characterized by this period.

Mr. Frost had been considered for the presidency before the death of Mr. Fairchild, however, he had refused.<sup>68</sup> After the death of Henry Fairchild, Professor Frost seemed to be the only man that might save the college from passing into oblivion. Berea again requested his services in 1892, at which time he accepted.<sup>69</sup> In passing it might be noted that there were less than fifty students to welcome him the first day in chapel.

The coming of Professor Frost to Berea is marked by the fact that he had a definite program in mind. Although he had not worked out all the details, he had the fundamental idea in mind that education is a type of social engineering. It was not merely the "preening of scholarly feathers on the campus," but must be much broader.<sup>70</sup> He further mentioned that society should be lifted up from the bottom, and that education should equip all sorts of people for all types of life problems. He had the original idea that the forms of education best adopted to the various groups

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<sup>67</sup> Ben LaBree, Notable Men of Kentucky (George G. Fetter Pub., Co., Louisville, Kentucky, 1901-1902), p. 487.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 487

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 488

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 490

could be nicely combined under one management.

In accepting the presidency he had expressedly pledged the trustees and faculty to a new regime. He immediately restored the Normal Department of Fairchild's time, and hastened to adopt courses of study which best suited the needs of the various pupils, and to construct industrial training buildings. At the same time he launched a campaign for more funds. Berea at this time, through President Frost, not only found new donors, but went out and actually made them.<sup>71</sup> Hundreds were drawn into giving to such a worthy cause in a very liberal way. In fact "making donations to Berea became the stylish thing to do."

Without doubt President Frost's greatest contribution to Berea was the departmental idea. His chief glory rests upon the development of this educational invention.<sup>72</sup> Thus around the college department, other large school took shape. Notable among the latter are the Foundation School, Junior High School, Academy, and Normal school.<sup>73</sup> Each began with a careful selection of a course of study which would be the most useful to the student in the actual life he had in prospect. Thus it was that Berea became a power-house of influence throughout the mountain ends of Kentucky, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Dr. Frost refused to apologize for introducing vocational courses; he boldly defended the theory that the unusual conditions

<sup>71</sup> Wm. Goodell Frost, Battles and Visions (Berea College Press, Berea, Kentucky, 1935), p. 6.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 7

of mountain life made the adoption of unusual tactics necessary. Instead of expecting boys and girls from isolated localities to adjust themselves to conventional courses of study he created new courses for their own particular need. That is "instead of expecting a square pin to fit in a round hole," he provided the square holes, with the more than pleasing results. <sup>74</sup>

He led the way in devising short courses fitted to supply the lower rungs in the educational ladder so that the humble might climb. He introduced vocational subjects, which took their rightful place along side of the older classical courses of study. He steadfastly labored to make education possible for those of small means, as had been the policy of Berea since the earliest days of the school. He attained this end by safeguarding the resources of the college.

The material gain of the college under President Frost's administration is indicated by the inventory values of 1892, at the time he became president, as compared with the inventory values in 1920, when he resigned because of ill health. In 1892 the effective worth of the institution was approximately \$200,000. A conservative estimate in connection with the inventory of 1920, his last year as president, indicated the worth of the college in excess of \$4,000.00. <sup>75</sup> This represents a twenty-fold gain.

<sup>74</sup>

Samuel M. Wilson, History of Education in Kentucky (The J. S. Clark Publishing Company, Chicago, Ill., 1928), II, 273.

<sup>75</sup>

Bulletin of Berea College and Allied Schools (Berea College Berea, Kentucky 1932-33), p. 11



There was a spiritual gain as well, for during the school year 1892-93 only 354 students were benefited by Berea, while in 1911-20 the number increased to 2,675. <sup>76</sup>

The administrative duties of Berea at the time Dr. Frost resigned fell upon the capable shoulders of Professor William J. Hutchins. <sup>77</sup> It is an outstanding tribute to Oberlin College to draw attention to the fact, that this institution has furnished Berea with an unbroken and continuous line of presidents. Mr. Hutchins came from a professorship in the Graduate School of Theology of Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio to begin his duties at Berea on commencement day, June 8, 1920. <sup>78</sup> The formal inauguration of President Hutchins did not take place, however, until October 22, 1920.

President Hutchins since then has been engaged in the task of carrying out the ideals of Reverend Fee, Professor Rogers, President Fairchild, and especially the program of Dr. Frost. <sup>79</sup> Thus Berea's national reputation for training students so as to enable them to go back to their communities (notably in mountain sections) equipped to perform services of high order has continued to grow and expand. <sup>79</sup>

As evidence of this the accumulated endowment of Berea College on June 15, 1932 was \$9,454.53. <sup>80</sup> Thus the capital of

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 11

<sup>77</sup> The Outlook, Published by the Outlook Company, 381, 4th Ave., N. Y., May 5, 1920, Vol. 125, p. 412-413.

<sup>78</sup> J. McKeen Cattell, Leaders in Education (The Science Press, N.Y.)

<sup>79</sup> Kentucky Progress Magazine, April, 1930, p. 31.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

wealth of the college has more than doubled during the administration of President Hutchins. There is little doubt now that Berea College with its educational opportunities for the mountain people of eight states, and a few select students from others, is firmly established. But the name and influences of John G. Fee, and perhaps even more closely associated with the greatness of Berea College today, than are the name and influence of Jefferson felt at the great school which he founded at Charlottesville, the University of Virginia.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE CLOSING YEARS OF JOHN C. FEE

The closing years of Mr. Fee are of far less importance than might at first be supposed. This is due to the fact that his great work was accomplished when he was still a comparatively young man. If he had died ten, twenty, or thirty years earlier, it might have been with less recognition, and probably with less agreement among men as to the value of his life. Nevertheless his great work for the oppressed colored man and the founding of Berea would still have been established past any fear of its loss to the world. All that the life of Mr. Fee means to us in the light of his four-score and five years is based upon the decisions of his early manhood when he decided that duty called him back to his native State of Kentucky. A little compromise at that time would have saved all, both the peril and the glory. A little concession to popular standards, a concession to the will of the majority, and he might have lived a comfortable and commonplace life. It adds to the immortal honor of Reverend Fee that such was not the case.

He was faithful in his beliefs. Even though he frequently had a rope around his own neck, he assisted in striking off the cords that bound a race. He did not cease his activities there, but continued to work for the betterment of their condition. It redounds to both the credit of Mr. Fee and Berea College that educational opportunities were early afforded the colored race at that institution.



As a result of an extensive study of Reverend Fee's life, it is obvious that he was averse to estimating the results of his own life. He did not believe in looking to results, but rather to bearing true testimony, and doing the right thing by his fellow-man even though the heavens might fall.<sup>1</sup> It is a consensus of opinions that John G. Fee was never actuated by any consideration of personal fame or self-aggrandizement.<sup>2</sup> His work was for God and humanity, and it is for this reason that his memory among men is conspicuous.

It has been noted that Reverend Fee became more or less inactive in regard to the administration of the college at the time that E. H. Fairchild became president.<sup>3</sup> He continued to make his home in Berea. He remained the pastor of the non-secretarian, Union Church which he founded back in 1853. He served as pastor of this church for forty-two years, until his retirement in 1895, due to the infirmities of old age.<sup>4</sup> His moral influence as a pastor in Berea, and his services as a lecturer and evangelist were inestimable during the later years of his life. Thus the noble qualities of this unique man strongly impressed the lives of the young students at Berea up until the time of his death, as he represented the living sacrifice to a great cause.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Blue Grass Bugle (Newspaper) Frankfort, Kentucky, July 18, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> The Church Union (Published weekly at No. 50 Breckman Street, New York City, 1900 (March 15)

<sup>3</sup> Berea Quarterly, (Student's Job Print, Berea College, Berea, Ky., 1900, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Christian Standard (Newspaper) Published in Cincinnati, Ohio, 1890)

<sup>5</sup> Taken from a letter written to the nearest kin of Mr. Fee and the faculty of Berea College at the time of Mr. Fee's death. The letter is from Elizabeth B. Grannis, New York, N.Y. dated January 6, 1900.



· REV. JOHN G. FEE

At the age of 60

To illustrate this point, Reverend Wm. E. Barton a graduate of the class of 1885 recounts this story.<sup>6</sup> "It chanced one day he met Mr. Fee on the campus. It was typical of Mr. Fee to be warm in his affections and full of buoyant joy. To be alive was to him an exhilaration. On this particular occasion he stopped young Barton, and with his face aglow asked, "Do you like to live," When the answer was in the affirmative, he replied, "So do I, and I rejoice in being alive." He was happiest when others rejoiced, but as naturally would be expected, he held his pleasures in strict subordination to his life purpose and ideals.<sup>7</sup>

He was president of the Board of Trustees from the beginning of the school in 1855, a position he held until 1892.<sup>8</sup> After this date he still remained a member of the Board. At his death, his tenure of office as a Trustee was not to expire until 1905. Even during the late years of his life, Father Fee was always consulted when an important question or difficult problem in reference to the college came up for consideration.

His later life was occupied with the writing of numerous tracts and pamphlets on various phases of Christian doctrine. The one for which he is best known is that of "Christian Baptism" published in 1891 by the Guide Printing Company in Louisville, Kentucky.<sup>9</sup> He also wrote the following pamphlets on Christian doctrine: "Subjects of Baptism" T. Holman, Printers and Publishers

<sup>6</sup> Berea Quarterly (Students' Job Print. Berea College, Berea, Ky., 1900), p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 16

<sup>8</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Manuscript from Edwin S. Fee, Clarksburg, Ind.



New York, "Conditions of Membership in the Church of Christ, published at Berea, Kentucky, 1899. He wrote many pamphlets on slavery. The one for which he is best known is that of "Sinfulness of Slaveholding," Printed by John A. Gray, New York, N. Y. In his book, Christian Baptism he interprets his beliefs regarding baptism, being fully convinced that immersion is the proper procedure and that it could not possibly mean sprinkling.<sup>10</sup>

At the request of his friends, Father Fee in 1886 started a sketch of his early life, his work in Kentucky, and particularly his labor in and around Berea. The outcome of this endeavor was the Autobiography which was published in 1891, by the National Christian Association, Chicago, Illinois. The reason that Mr. Fee gave his writing his Autobiography is a very good one indeed, "In this way I may continue to do good and utter truth when my tongue shall be silent."<sup>11</sup>

This work undoubtedly constitutes one of the best sources of material regarding the life and work of Mr. Fee and his connection with Berea College. The writing of this book represents the greatest achievement of his closing years, because through this book his trials, sufferings, and accomplishments are recorded in his own words for future generations. In addition he impresses upon the mind of the reader that it is necessary to trust God. By tenaciously holding on to faith you will see his face, the Red Sea of difficulties will open before you, and you can walk through on the dry sand.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Fee's Autobiography, p. 5 (Preface)

The Reverend John Gregg Fee passed to his eternal reward at about seven o'clock on the evening of Friday, January 11, 1901.<sup>12</sup> His death occurred at his residence in Berea. For several months he had been a cripple, having broken his hip in a fall at Camp Nelson some weeks before. His condition had continued to improve and hope was manifested for his rapid recovery.<sup>13</sup>

On this particular Friday evening he had enjoyed his frugal supper and retired at the usual early hour. A few moments later he called his daughter Mrs. Laura Fee Embree. She found him breathing with difficulty and shortly thereafter he expired. The news of his decease was soon communicated to the other members of the family, to the college, and then conveyed by the press to the general public.<sup>14</sup>

The funeral and Memorial Exercises were set for Thursday, the 15th and were attended by a large concourse of people. The funeral services were conducted by Reverend H. J. Derthick. After the funeral the body was taken from the church to the college chapel for the Memorial Exercises. After the preliminary services addresses were made in commemoration of the passing of Father Fee by President Wm. G. Frost, Reverend Wm. E. Barton, Reverend James Bond (colored), Honorable J. D. Goodloe, and Honorable Curtis F. Burnam.<sup>15</sup>

It is well to call attention to the address made by Reverend Barton, in which he compares life to the Niagara River.

<sup>12</sup> The Berea Quarterly, February, 1901 (Berea College, Berea, Kentucky) Vol. V, No. 4, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

"We all live on such a river and the name we give to the plunge is Death, and towards this precipice all life moves. God can lift the life of a good man that has passed over this falls, to the eternal bliss of heaven, just as the sun through its rays can lift the water in the form of vapor, high into the sky to form the clouds of the heavens."<sup>16</sup>

It was pointed out by both Reverend Barton and the Hon. Curtis F. Burnam that Berea College was Mr. Fee's undying monument.<sup>17</sup> They both referred to the inscription upon the sepulcher of the great architect, Sir Christopher Wren, the designer of St. Paul's Cathedral. Upon Wren's death he was buried in the great church he had planned, and a tablet was placed over his last resting place, bearing the Latin inscription, "Si Monumentum Quaeris, Circumspice," which means when translated "If you seek his monument, look about you."<sup>18</sup>

Secretary J. E. Roy, D. D., writes of Mr. Fee, "The Reformers build their own monument. Berea College is Mr. Fee's monument, that will stand through generations to bless them and the people they shall number. Men die; institutions live; Men die; God carries on the work. And more and more will it be the pride of Kentuckians that it was one of their own sons, John G. Fee, who opened to their commonwealth this fountain of Christian learning."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Berea Quarterly, p. 20, 1900.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 30

<sup>18</sup> The World Book, (W.F. Quarrie Company Chicago, Ill., 1924) X, 361-362.

<sup>19</sup> The Advance, Chicago, January 24, 1901, XI, 1837.



The analogy can still be drawn. If you wish to see the true monument of John G. Fee go to Berea and visit the great institution of learning. In it he has erected a monument more lasting than brass or granite, a monument whose foundations rests upon principles as eternal as God, and whose body is more durable than brick, stone, or mortar. Thousands of loving hearts have found their inspiration in him and in the Christ he loved and preached. He was a tower of strength in his work, and Berea remains his outstanding monument.

The following was written by Mr. Henry Allen Laine of College Hill, Kentucky.<sup>20</sup>

IN MEMORY OF JOHN G. FEE

Another brave spirit has crossed  
the dark river,  
With God's chosen spirits to  
dwell  
Gone equally laden with  
honors and years,  
His spent relieving earth's  
sufferings and tears,  
With sorrow we bid him farewell!

Nay, nay, friends why weep ye,  
our hero's not dead,  
His passing is but a transition,  
From this life higher begun  
here below  
By the same hidden process by  
which roses blow,  
Increasing in beauty forever.

We cherish his memory, Kentucky's  
great hero,  
We emulate his virtues, God  
Given!

The patriot, and preacher, phil-  
anthropist, friend,  
"A fool for Christ's sake," who  
stood firm to the end,  
Ah, Great his reward is in heaven!

In conclusion it might be stated that Mr. Rogers, President Fairchild, and others materially aided Mr. Fee in building up the college, nevertheless, its birth was in his brains. It is safe to say "had he become a Foreign Missionary to Africa, rather than a Missionary to his native state, Kentucky, there would have been no Berea College today."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted from a speech made by Fee's grandson at Berea College, 1932. The speech appeared in the "Pinnacle" published at Berea, Kentucky.

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